The Ruling Regarding Birthdays

<u>Question:</u> What do the Ulema of Deen and the Muftis say about the following: The Christians here in Britain have the custom of celebrating birthdays. Every year on the date of a child's birth, they invite family and friends and even arrange for music to be played. Each person then brings a gift and a large cake is prepared according to the age of the person. A number of candles corresponding with the number of years in the person's age are then placed on the cake. If the child is five years old, five candles are placed on the cake and if he is six, six candles are placed. When everyone then gathers at night, the child blows out the candles. It is regarded as a good sign if all the candles are extinguished in one breath and then everyone starts to cheer. The child then gets to cut the cake and everyone starts to sing, "Happy birthday to you!"

Although this practice is a Christian practice, many Muslims from India, Pakistan and other countries are also gradually adopting it. We appeal to you to please shed light on the subject from viewpoint of the Qur'aan and Ahadeeth. May Allaah reward you abundantly. It is very possible that Allaah will use your writing as a means of guidance for the Muslims here. (Bartley, England)

<u>Answer:</u> Hadhrat Abu Sa'eed Khudri τ reports that Rasulullaah ρ said, "You people will certainly follow in the footsteps of those before you, handspan by handspan and arm's length by arm's length to the extent that even if they entered the hole of a chameleon, you would do the same."[1]

Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Amr τ narrates that Rasulullaah ρ said, "Everything that happened to the Bani Israa'eel shall happen to my Ummah just as one footstep follows another, to the extent that even if one of them committed open incest with his mother, there will be someone from my Ummah who will do the same."[2]

How can someone who professes to believe in Rasulullaah ρ and who recites the Kalimah ever do the things stated in the question? May Allaah forgive. These acts of sheer ignorance and kufr can be carried out only by those who have no Imaan or whose Imaan is at the lowest ebb.
Tafseer Baydawi[3] mentions some practices of the Kuffaar and then adds that adopting them is Kufr not because they are Kufr in themselves but because they denote refutation of Rasulullaah ρ. A person who believes that Rasulullaah ρ is the true Nabi will never adopt these practices."

Rasulullaah ρ said, "Whoever imitates a nation is from amongst them (in the Aakhirah)."[4] Rasulullaah ρ also said, "None of you can be Mu'min until his desires are subservient to that (Deen) which I have brought."[5]

Hadhrat Abdul Qaadir Jaylaani رحمه الله said, "Saying that you are part of the Ummah of Rasulullaah ρ will not benefit you until you follow him in word and in deed. Only then will you be in his company in the Aakhirah."[6]

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[1] Bukhaari (Vol.2 Pg.1088).
[2] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.30).
[3] Pg. 23.
[4] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.375).
[5] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.30).
[6] *Fat'hur Rabbaani* Pg.178.

Imitating the Kuffaar is a despised act indeed. Allaama Ibn Hajar Haythami رحمه الله has quoted from Hadhrat Maalik bin Dinaar رحمه الله that Allaah once sent revelation to one of the Ambiyaa عليهم السلام saying, "Tell your people that they should never enter the places of My enemies, never wear the clothing of My enemies and never use the means of transport of My enemies, otherwise (when they cannot be differentiated) they may become My enemies just like them."[7]

Doctor Allaama Iqbal complains (in a couplet which means):

"There is a clamour that there are no Muslims on earth
We say that there must be some Muslims around
Their dressing however is that of the Christians and culture that of the Hindus
Looking at these Muslims even the Jews are put to shame"

People were never invited for birthdays during the time of Rasulullaah ρ and even though circumcision is a Sunnah and emphasised practice, people were not even invited to celebrate this. Hadhrat Hasan رحمه الله reports that when someone invited Hadhrat Uthmaan bin Abul Aas τ to a circumcision ceremony, he refused the offer saying, **"Neither did we invite people for a circumcision ceremony during the time of Rasulullaah ρ, nor did we attend any."**[8]

Celebrating birthdays is purely a non-Muslim custom that Muslims should avoid. If they do not, there is the great danger of their Imaan becoming corrupted. Allaah says in the Qur'aan: ***"And do not incline towards*** *(do not associate with and do not imitate)* ***those who do wrong*** *(the Kuffaar)****, for then the Fire*** *(of Jahannam)* ***shall reach you and you will not have any helpers*** *(to save you)* ***against*** *(the punishment of)* ***Allaah and you will not be assisted*** *(by anyone)****."***[9]

The Shari'ah has taught us everything that we need to do and Allaah has also sent Rasulullaah ρ to demonstrate everything practically. Allaah says: ***"There is definitely an excellent example in Allaah's Rasool ρ for the one who fears Allaah and the Last Day, and who remembers Allaah abundantly."***[10]

Another verse of the Qur'aan states: ***"Hold fast to what (commands) the Rasool ρ gives you and refrain from what (actions) He prevents you (because whatever he instructs you is from Allaah)."***[11]

It is therefore necessary to act according to the example Rasulullaah ρ set. Ignoring this example is to beg from the Kuffaar and follow their ways shows gross ingratitude to the bounty that Allaah blessed us with. The Sahabah ψ made his example their beacon light and led their lives as Rasulullaah ρ taught them. Because of this, they accomplished great feats that will be remembered until the Day of Qiyaamah. They also received Allaah's unseen help because of this and their enemies were awestruck by them. Allaah also sent angels to assist them, as Allaah says about the Battle of Badr: ***"When your Rabb commanded the angels saying, "Indeed I am with you, so strengthen the Mu'mineen (assist them in battle). I soon shall cast terror into the hearts of the Kuffaar..."***[12]

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[7] *Zawaajir an Iftiraaqil Kabaa'ir* Pg.15.
[8] Ahmad (Vol.4 Pg.217).
[9] Surah Hood, verse 113.
[10] Surah Ahzaab, verse 21.
[11] Surah Hashar, verse 7.
[12] Surah Anfaal, verse 12.

Concerning the Battle of Uhud, Allaah says: ***"We shall soon cast fear into the hearts of the Kuffaar because they ascribe partners to Allaah*** *(an act)* ***for which no justification has been revealed. Their abode*** *(in the Aakhirah)* ***is the Fire*** *(of Jahannam)****, and it*** *(Jahannam)* ***is indeed an evil abode for the oppressors*** *(the wrongdoers)****."***[13]

There was a Jewish tribe living in Madinah called the Banu Qurayzah. They were always scheming to harm the Muslims and concerning the time when the Muslims finally confronted them in battle, Allaah says: ***"He*** *(Allaah)* ***made those people of the Book*** *(the Jewish Banu Qurayzah tribe)* ***who assisted them*** *(the combined armies)* ***descend from their fortresses*** *(when the Muslims laid siege to them after the battle)* ***and He cast fear into their hearts*** *(causing them to surrender without a fight)****. You execute a party of them and take another party as prisoners."***[14]

Concerning the time when the Muslims faced the Jewish Banu Nadheer tribe in battle, Allaah says, ***"Allaah cast terror*** *(for the Muslims)* ***into their hearts*** *(the hearts of the Jews)* ***and*** *(when they prepared to leave Madinah,)* ***they uprooted*** *(took down)* ***their homes with their own hands*** *(to take with them as much as they could carry)* ***and with the hands of the Mu'mineen*** *(who assisted them to leave)****. So take heed, O people with insight!***"[15]

All this was attained because the Sahabah ψ followed the ways of Rasulullaah ρ. Rasulullaah ρ said, "Allaah will honour a person with four favours when he cares for my Sunnah. (These are:) Love for Him in the hearts of the righteous, fear for Him in the hearts of the sinners, abundance in sustenance and steadfastness in Deen."[16] And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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[13] Surah Anfaal, verse 151.
[14] Surah Ahzaab, verse 26.
[15] Surah Hashar, verse 2.
[16] *Sharhu Shar'atil Islaam* Pg. 8.